



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

*The right system for bright futures*

**Date of Submission:** December 26, 2008  
**Submitting Agency:** First Things First, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council  
**Contact Person:** Rochelle Lacapa, MPH, Regional Coordinator  
**Contact Number:** (928) 532-5041

### ***Letter to the Editor- First Things First and the National Plan for Early Education***

Recently the New York Times ran a story on the importance of investing in children while they are young. The media coverage highlighted President-elect Obama's strategic focus on early childhood education and the excitement that commitment has generated throughout the country. Research shows that a child's brain develops the most during the first years of life and that education starts at birth. Additionally, investments in early childhood result in higher graduation and employment rates, which mean children grow up and can contribute to society. As a result, there would be a decrease in crime and dependency on welfare. The economics and the brain science are clear on why we must make this developmental period of a child's life a top priority.

This is the right direction for our country and our state, focusing on our future workforce so that we are preparing our children to compete in a global market place. We need to get back to the fundamentals. This begins with providing a solid educational foundation which must start at birth.

Arizona is on track and is ahead of the game. In 2006 the citizens of Arizona approved proposition 203, now First Things First, which provided an eighty cent tax on tobacco products for early childhood development and health. Through locally driven Regional Partnership Councils, First Things First is investing in children so that all children have equal opportunities for quality early childhood education.

Over the next several years, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council will work to build a system for children that will focus on parent/family support, dental disease reduction in young children, early literacy and language development, and increased awareness regarding early childhood health and development.

As citizens and elected officials we must not make choices that negatively impact our children's future. If we want to grow our economy and ensure the White Mountain Apache Tribe thrives and grows, we must invest in children.

Should you have any questions or would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at [rlacapa@azftf.gov](mailto:rlacapa@azftf.gov).

New York Times: [Obama's \\$10 Billion Promise Stirs Hope in Early Education - NYTimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/us/politics/02education.html)